



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAR 6 " 2014

Dear Ms. Hartzler:

Thank you for your letter of September 26, 2013, to President Obama regarding U.S. citizen Saeed Abedini, who also holds Iranian citizenship. Mr. Abedini has been detained in Iran since September 2012. We have been asked to respond on the President's behalf.

The Department of State's highest priority is the safety and welfare of U.S. citizens overseas, and we remain actively engaged on Mr. Abedini's case. We are deeply disappointed that Mr. Abedini was sentenced to eight years in prison in Iran on charges related to his religious beliefs. We are aware of the recent transfer of Mr. Abedini to Rajai Shahr prison and have asked the Iranian authorities to address our concerns about his health and prison conditions. We are committed to doing all we can to ensure Mr. Abedini's safe return to his family in the United States. We raise the case at every opportunity and actively search for additional avenues to pursue his release.

The Administration and the Department strongly support freedom of religion for adherents of all faiths throughout the world as a central component of our foreign policy. President Obama raised Mr. Abedini's case directly with Iranian President Rouhani in their September 26, 2013, call and Secretary Kerry raised the case with Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif. President Obama also publicly called for Mr. Abedini's release at the National Prayer Breakfast on February 6. Secretary Kerry has issued public statements, most recently on August 28, 2013, expressing deep concern about Mr. Abedini's fate and calling for his release. Secretary Kerry stated in his public remarks at NATO Headquarters on December 3 that the Department continues to do everything it can to secure Mr. Abedini's release. The Secretary echoed this commitment in his testimony before the House Foreign Relations Committee on December 10 and noted that the Department has raised the issue with our international partners. The Department sent a representative to deliver remarks calling for Mr. Abedini's release and for Iran to respect the universal value of religious freedom at the September 26, 2013, vigil marking the one-year anniversary of Mr. Abedini's detention. This Administration will continue to promote and protect this fundamental freedom, including for members of religious minorities, in Iran and around the world.

The Honorable

Vicky J. Hartzler,

House of Representatives.

Since the United States does not have an official diplomatic presence in Iran, we have repeatedly requested that Iranian officials grant Mr. Abedini access to consular officials of the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, which serves as the U.S. protecting power in Iran. To date, Iranian authorities have not permitted consular access, citing that Iran does not recognize Mr. Abedini's U.S. citizenship and considers him solely an Iranian citizen. This is consistent with Iran's response to all U.S. requests for consular access to dual U.S.-Iranian citizens.

We trust this information is helpful to you. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact Heidi Ramsay in the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at (202) 485-6066.

Sincerely,



Julia Frifield
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs